Caretene

(c. 456 – September 16, 506)

BRIEFING

Carétène (also Caretena) (born c. 456 – died September 16, 506) was the wife of Gundobad, king of the Burgundians. Unlike her husband, who was an Arian, Carétène was a Catholic. She was probably the mother of Sigismund of Burgundy.

According to her epitaph, Carétène was known for helping the poor, and encouraging clemency toward her husband's prisoners. She is credited with founding a monastic Church of St. Michael in Lyons. Most likely, this church is also where she was buried.

EPITAPH

Source:

Original Latin Inscription	Translation to English (by GPT-5)
Sceptrorum columen, terræ decus et jubar orbis, *Hoc artus tumulo vult Caretena tegi:* *Quâ famulam tu, Christe, tuam, rerumque potentem,* *De mundi regnis ad tua regna vocas,* *Thesaurum ditem felici fine secutam,* *Fotis pauperibus quem dedit illa Deo.* *Jamdudùm castum castigans aspera corpus,* *Delituit vestis murice sub rutilo.* *Occuluit læto jejunia sobria vultu,* *Secretèque dedit regia membra cruci,* *Principis excelsi curas partita mariti,* *Adjuncto rexit culmina consilio.* *Præclaram sobolem dulcesque gavisa nepotes,* *Ad veram doctos sollicitare fidem.* *Dotibus hic pollens sublimi mente subire,* *Non sprevit sacrum post diadema jugum.* *Cedat odoriferis quondam dominata Sabæis,* *Expetiit mirum quæ Salomonis opus.* *Condidit hæc templum præsens quod personat orbe,* *Angelicisque dedit limina celsa choris.* *Laxatura reos, regi quas sæpè ferebat,* *Has offerre preces, nunc tibi, Christe, potest.* *Quam cùm post decimum rapuit mors invida lustrum,* *Accepit melior tum sine fine dies.* *Jamque bis octonâ septembrum luce movebat,* *Nomen Messalæ consulis annus egens*	*Pillar of sceptres, Earth's glory and the world's bright ray,* *Here Caretena would have her limbs entombed and lay.* *Thou, Christ, by whom thy handmaid — once of earthly might —* *Art called from mortal realms to dwell within thy light;* *A treasure rich, who followed then a happier close,* *And gave her wealth, a gift to God, for those who lack and those.* *Long since she chastened, with austere and steady art,* *Her body pure; yet hid soft robes that touched her heart.* *Her fasts she veiled beneath a sober cheerful face,* *And in secret lent her royal frame unto the Cross's grace.* *With her high prince she shared the burdens of his state,* *And, joined in counsel, guided civic heights and weight.* *She rejoiced in noble offspring and delighted years,* *And strove to draw the learned to faith by prayers and tears.* *In gifts abundant, lifted up by lofty mind,* *She scorned not holy service after wearing crown combined.* *Once mistress of the fragrant realms of Sabaean lands,* *She fulfilled, in wondrous work, what Solomon's hand planned.* *This very temple she founded that the world proclaims,* *And gave its lofty thresholds to the choirs of angelic names.* *She who would loose the guilty, often bore the king her plea,* *These prayers she now may bring, O Christ, to thee.* *When envious Death at last the tenth five-year cycle reft,* *A better, endless day received her, sorrow left.* *And when the light of September rose upon the sixteenth sun,* *The year was scant of Messala's consul name — thus one.*